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CANTON

The Most Stupendous Non-Christian City
of Earth



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CANTON

THE MOST STUPENDOUS NON-CHRISTIAN CITY OF EARTH

THE SETTING

Eight hours by boat, four hours by train from Honkong in the extreme south of China is Canton, the most stupendous, the most overwhelming non-Christian city in the world. This is true not only of the changes which are in active evolution but as to the number of the population, the cunning art, the varied industries, the progressiveness and alertness of the Cantonese.

The city is sub-tropic in climate. Old buildings, old thoroughfares, old prisons, old temples, all things old are being superseded by Western and modern types, but the city is so vast and so compact that decades may pass before the change is complete. It lies on both sides of the Pearl River, a stream burdened with thousands of water craft upon which live 400,000 of its people. Opposite from the main city are two islands, the



One of the Old City Gates

home of no small part of the population. The western suburb, with miles of granite streets along which are the homes of wealthy citizens, extends the city. The eastern suburb has the railway that runs from Hongkong to Canton, several mission plants, and a growing manufacturing district.

INITIATIVE

Canton was the first city in China to organize its Young Women's Christian Association at the initiative and wholly at the call of its own women. The National Secretary had visited the city at various times, meeting with Chinese and foreigners and explaining the purpose of the Association. At the assurance and invitation of the missionaries that the Association was desired, a request was sent to America for secretaries. None had been sent and in 1912 the Chinese ladies decided they could wait no longer for help from the West. They formed a provisional organization, adopted a provisional constitution, and wrote to national headquarters in Shanghai for assistance in finding a secretary and in developing their work.

CITY BOARD

The personnel of the Cantonese women who acted thus independently is interesting. Among the group are wives of prominent professional and

business men, women physicians and principals of girls' schools. Two young women were graduates of the Canton Christian College, an institution for boys. There being no girls' school of higher learning, these two young women and three others were allowed to take up the course with the boys, and they graduated, carrying away the honors. Only these five girls have ever been admitted to this institution. At the opening of the revolution, when the provincial Assembly was convened, several ladies of the committee were asked to sit with the legislature, an honor which they appreciated but declined. Several ladies who accepted the invitation sat but a few sessions with the Assembly.

THE SECRETARIES

When the ladies had organized their Association, their chief anxiety was to secure a secretary who was conversant with the Cantonese dialect. There are less than one hundred Chinese women in Canton who can speak the English language. On consultation with the National Committee of the Young Women's Christian Association, they decided to request the Presbyterian Mission to release to them one of its workers, Miss Mary



On Jade Street

Bankes, to act as their secretary for two years, while a secretary to be supplied from the United States was getting a working knowledge of the language. The Canton Women's Missionary Conference seconded this request, which was generously granted by the Presbyterian Board on the recommendation of the Canton Mission station. Miss Bankes' term of service will expire in December, 1914.

Miss Henrietta Thomson was sent in November, 1912, from the United States and was greeted with warm welcome and immediate fellowship by the membership in Canton. The united task of guiding the Association policy and of studying the language makes Miss Thomson's first years exceedingly heavy. Not later than the autumn of this year a secretary must be sent as her associate in Canton. Two American secretaries in a city of 2,000,000 people can only make beginnings.

THE FIELD

When few cities in China had schools for women, there were in Canton thirty-eight girls' schools. There are today more than a score of institutions for girls, some of which are in most excellent condition; the girls' normal school numbers more than three hundred students. Private schools



Lotus in a Private Courtyard

are numerous. There are schools for the study of medicine and nursing. While the term of existence of these schools is usually of limited duration, the quality of education which they give is steadily improving. Modern methods of instruction and discipline are gaining in favor. Heretofore it has not been uncommon for women to go in a group from one school to another seeking to find the instruction which they as homekeepers and mothers are desirous of obtaining. The progressiveness of the men in the Cantonese homes has been occasion of intellectual stimulus for their wives and sisters. Women by the hundreds have attended lectures given by the Young Men's Christian Association, whose helpful council is much appreciated by the Young Women's Christian Association. The Board in Canton has in its plans an educational department which will seek to meet this very conspicuous need. Plays illustrative of the wrong of slavery for girls, protesting against the irate mother-in-law and setting forth Western customs are eagerly applauded and are fruitful of reformation.

THE INCENTIVE OF ENCOURAGEMENT

That the Association was organized by the Chinese unassisted by Westerners is sufficient guarantee of the interest of the women of the city.



A Social Afternoon True Light Seminary—"Playing Bride"

Their method of securing headquarters and their discussion of plans for employing a Chinese secretary, without thinking of referring to Westerners for financial aid, denotes the independent temper of the people. The membership now exceeds three hundred twenty-five.

Last year the Commissioner of Education for the Kwantung Province — of which Canton is capital — requested the Association to establish a hostel, or boarding home, for government school girls. Students of the normal school attended a Bible class taught through the summer, and two of their number were received into the church. Later there was a request that a Bible teacher be sent to take a class in the Government Normal School. That no one was found to teach this class is a conclusive argument that secretaries are needed in Canton to find leaders, to train those who will be able to teach his Word. A neighborhood Sunday school is now conducted with an attendance of sixty women.

THE INCENTIVE OF DIFFICULTY

The Cantonese dialect is one of the most difficult in all China, there being ten distinct tones to master in speaking. The rapid progress of things political and social requires strenuous zeal on the part of the secre-

taries to keep abreast of the changes in the city. The extent of the city, stretching more than ten miles along the riverside, enclosed partly by walls, accessible in many places only by boat or by sedan chair that are prohibitively expensive; the division of the city into three parts; the time that is necessarily consumed in traveling by boat because of the opposition of tides in the river—all these increase the difficulties of secretarial work.

THE PROBLEM OF HEADQUARTERS

The first headquarters of the Association was in the home of Dr. Leung, a woman physician whose husband is a student in the United States. The great fire in the fall of 1912 swept away a considerable portion of the city, including the home of Dr. Leung. The records and furniture of the Association were saved, and within a week a room on the "bund" by the riverside was secured and the weekly lecture or Bible class was again in progress. During the past winter headquarters was moved from the business section to the western suburb and located among the homes of the women of leisure. Either location has its disadvantages. The fact is already apparent before the board, and committees are working that more than one center for work must eventually be established. The

board is actively engaged in selecting a site and in plans for a financial campaign for \$20,000 to purchase a building site. A branch near the river with hotel accommodation for traveling women and near the homes of the board ladies is as necessary as is the center in the residence district where the ladies of leisure may attend classes and lectures. It is apparent that the modest request for two secretaries in Canton suffices only for today.

STUDENT BRANCHES

Christian education for girls in Canton is not as advanced as in other sections of the nation. There are schools giving teaching through the eighth and tenth grades, in four of which there are student branches of the Young Women's Christian Association. The age of the girls in the schools is higher than in corresponding grades in the United States. Fourteen is the lowest age limit in student branches in China. These student young women are some of them exceedingly interested in the city Association and will be valuable workers as it develops. A growing number of Cantonese young women are coming to the United States for advanced training. Their ideals for Western education are high.

CANTON IN AMERICA

To the Cantonese, as to no other division of the Chinese people, does America owe a debt whose payment will in part offset the wrongs we have committed through unwise legislation and race prejudice. A frank friendship that will dispel suspicion will go far to make possible the understanding of the Kingdom of Christ. It is the Cantonese who form the Chinese population in the United States. Some of them are men of wealth and influence who are educating their sons and daughters in American schools. Thousands of Cantonese have homes in Honolulu. Of these young women born under the flag of the United States five have returned to China during the past three years. At least ten more are planning to return to their home land with the definite purpose of aiding Chinese women to a higher life. To them the Association affords a practical field of service for their own people, but this field is not open unless secretaries be sent at once to do the part which China cannot do for itself and for which no nation is as well fitted to send help as the people of the United States.

THE efficiency of this booklet depends upon its readers. When you have read it, sign your name on this page and pass it on. It adds to the interest of each reader to know who have shared its silent message.